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ABSTRACT

The impact of economic conditions on two-earner families was examined. Three family types were studied: (1) dual-career family--both the husband and wife are in the labor force but in occupations classified as professional-technical or managerial; (2) dual-earner--both the husband and wife are in the labor force; and (3) traditional family--the husband is the only earner. Telephone and personal interviews were conducted with a subsample (N=3,194) of the 1982 Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan). Results showed that the dual-career family is different in make-up and in income generation from either the dual-earner or traditional family. Dual-career wives and husbands tend to be older and have fewer children and higher personal income; they tend to have higher educational levels, are more likely to be white, and are less likely to be unemployed. Dual-career families have higher total income and are more likely to own their own homes, and to have higher home values. Overall, the dual-career family was found to be doing better economically than either the dual-earner or traditional family. (RM)

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DUAL-INCOME FAMILIES

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine the impact economic conditions was having on three family types--the dual-career, dual-earner and traditional family. Data from the 1982 Panel Study of Income Dynamics were analyzed using chi square and differences of means tests. The results indicated that the dual-career family was different in make-up and income generation than either the dual-earner or traditional family. Further, results supported the general hypothesis that the dual-career family was doing better than either the dual-earner or traditional family during this time of economic down-turn.

DUAL-INCOME FAMILIES

We, as a country, have moved from an agrarian to an industrial economy. At present, we are functioning in an informational era (Toffler, 1983; Naisbett,1984). The transition from an industrial society to an information economy has not been accomplished without impacting on the well-being of the family generally, and on careers and employment status of females specifically (Garreau, 1981). These changes have not been in isolated areas or sections of the country, but are nationwide and throughout business and industry.

United States census data (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1982) strongly suggests the households of the 1990's will be different from those of the 1970's. In well over 50 percent of the families in the 1990's will have women pursuing full-time employment and careers (Masnick & Bane, 1980). Therefore, the number of two-paycheck households is predicted to continue to increase.

The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, we will analyze data on changes which are occurring in the economy. Second, we will examine the impact that these changes are having on two-earner families.

A definition of specialized terms will clarify our discussion. The dual-career family is defined as the family situation in which both the husband and wife are in the labor force but in occupations classified as professional-technical or managerial. The dual-earner is defined as the family where both the husband and wife are in the labor force. The traditional family is identified as the family type in which the husband is the only earner.

In addition, to clarify terms, a review of pertinent studies will place the discussion into an appropriate context. This literature can be divided into two broad categories of research on dual careers, and studies on employment and housing trends.

Studies focusing on dual income families began in the 1960's (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1965). These initial studies officially recognize the link between the role of work and family (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1965; 1971; Kanter, 1977; Skinner, 1977). No longer are the role of work and the role of family separate entities as Piotrkowski (1978) suggested. There is now recognized interaction, both positive and negative, between these roles. As Rapoport & Rapoport stated, "The two roles are linked, and what happens in one affects the other" (1982, p. 233).

Persons functioning in dual career families have reported a general feel in satisfaction even though they have increased levels of stress. Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) stated that the willingness to accept stress may be a necessary condition to occupational choices. Holmstron (1972) found that wives tended to have a great deal of resentment toward those circumstances which tended to favor the career of husbands over that of the wives. These women reported they often felt their careers were subordinate to their husbands during early child rearing and sometimes professionally disadvantaged because of anti-nepotism rules. Within the dual career of family, the wife tended to emphasize her occupation as her primary source of fulfillment. This was usually related to the fact that wives with careers were required to have higher degrees of commitment to their jobs than working wives with no careers (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). Poloma

and Garland (1970) found that often wives with careers experienced a high degree of anxiety in regards to being more successful than their husbands. Many times this anxiety was increased because of negative endorsements from relatives and friends.

For the past few years, the median family income has declined. Families in large metropolitan areas, married couple families, families with wives in the paid labor force, two-earner families, and three person families have had about a 3.2% decline in the real medium income (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983). Also, in 1980, 52 percent of all married couples were two earner families (Hayghe, 1982). This was a change from the picture presented in 1968 when dual-earner families were about equal (45%) to the traditional families (Hayghe, 1982). Families with one earner have declined from 45 percent to less than 31 percent of all families (Aldous, 1982). Aldous (1982) pointed out that the big change we are seeing in the population is not necessarily related to the growth of the dual earner family but in the decline in the number of traditional families.

In summary, it was found that women are participating more in the labor force. They are also assuming more professional and managerial positions (Greiff, 1980). Men are continuing to hold their own in high ranking positions (Olson & McCubbin, 1983). However, there is a tendency to view movement from one job to the next in terms of the benefit to the family as a whole, rather than just his upward mobility.

Morris and Winter (1978) have reported that the preference of one American family is to own a single-family detached home. This type of housing is preferred to the multi-unit dwelling even for urban residents (Michelson, 1976). As Hohn (1983) suggests this norm has been present

for some time and appears to be a standard that is likely to continue. However, the current increase in housing costs has made homeownership more difficult for the American family to attain (Hinkle & Combs, 1983). The resulting increase in housing costs has resulted in families spending a larger proportion of their income for housing (Morris & Winter, 1978; Meeks, 1984). This has forced families to make sacrifices in other areas such as food, clothing and transportation (Hinkle & Combs, 1983).

The literature also suggests that different family types spend different amounts for their homes (Banner, Berheide and Greckei, 1982; Hohm, 1983; Meeks, 1984). Banner, Berheide & Greckel (1982) suggested that the single and dual-earner family types desire different housing demands than the traditional family. However, special needs such as location in regards to job and family, play a greater role in predicting housing preferences than does family type.

The current economic outlook does not appear to be too rosy. We are experiencing some of the highest unemployment in our history as a nation (Hefferan, 1984). This trend is expected to continue to persist throughout the 80's due to changes in consumer preferences, changing technology and obsolence (Toffler, 1983; Naisbett, 1984). Hefferan (1984) reported that those least affected are married men with spouses present, and that blue-collar workers are more likely to experience unemployment than white collar workers.

Continued unemployment results in overall decreases in family income. As reported by Terry (1982) workers with jobs in 1980 earned two and a half times as much income as those who were unemployed

during all or part of the year. Thus research on dual-careers and economics both indicate changes in family structure.

Research Design

While past researchers recognize the growth of the dual earner and the dual-career families, studies that further explain the impact of current economic changes were family work roles needs to be highlighted. To that end, this study was designed to provide greater knowledge in regards to the changes occurring in the job market and determined the impact these changes are having on families and the females in those families.

There are four prepositions that this study is examining.

(1) Dual-career families will be different from either dual-earner or traditional families.
   (a) Dual-career females and males will be older than dual-earner or traditional females and males.
   (b) Dual-career families will have fewer children than either dual-earner or traditional families.
   (c) Dual-career females and males will have higher personal incomes than either dual-earner or traditional females and males.

(2) Dual-career families will have higher total family income than either dual-earner or traditional families.

(3) Dual-career wives and husbands will have higher educational levels than dual-earner or traditional husbands and wives.

(4) Dual-career females and males will have lower ratios of unemployment than dual-earner or traditional females and males.

(5) Dual-career families will be more likely to own their own homes and have higher home values than either dual-earner or traditional families.

(6) Dual-career families are more likely to be white than either dual-earner or traditional families.

Subjects

Respondents in our research were part of a large national sample of the 1982 panel study of income dynamics for the Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (Duncan & Morgan, 1982). A subsample of 3,194 families was used. There were 1,659 dual-earner families, 253 dual-career families, and 1,284 traditional families. This sample was particularly appropriate because it contained a numerous and representative cross-section of American families.

Interviewers

Trained interviewers using the same questionnaire collected 9.1. percent of the data via telephone interviews. The remaining were collected by personal interviews. These interviews lasted approximately 26.5 minutes. A total of 6,620 interviews out of approximately 6,840 were usable after legitimate adjustments were made for death and illness. This generated a final response rate of 97.7 percent.

Results

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that there are differences among the three family types. Dual-career wives and husbands tend to be older, have fewer children, and higher personal income than either dual-earner or traditional wives and husbands. Thus hypothesis one, that they would be significantly older, have

fewer children, and higher personal incomes than dual-earner or traditional wives and husbands was accepted.

Insert Table 1 here

When a Chi square test were calculated between total taxable family income and family type it showed that there was a significant differences between family type and the income earned, $X^2(12, N=3196) = 473.226$, p .0001. Dual-career families are more likely to have higher incomes ($40,001-75,000 and over) as compared with either the dual-earner or traditional family. Consequently, hypothesis two, that dual-career families would have higher total family income than either dual-earner or traditional families was accepted. See Table 2 for comparisons.

Insert Table 2 here

There was a significant difference between family type and the education of the wives and husbands. Dual-career wives and husbands were likely to have higher educational levels, 13 years or more, than either dual-earner or traditional wives, $X^2(4, N=3159) = 274.252$, p .0001 and $X^2(4, N=3142) = 181.613$, p .0001, respectively.

Comparisons were made between the dependent and independent variables. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between unemployment and family type for both females and males. Dual-career wives and husbands were less likely to be unemployed than dual-earner wives and husbands. The following Chi squares were calculated for females and males respectively, $X^2(1, N=1820) = 20.084$, p .0001 and $X^2(2, N=3040) = 35.969$, p .0001. Therefore, hypothesis

four, that dual-career females and males would have lower unemployment rates than dual-earner and traditional females and males was accepted.

Dual-career families are more likely to own their homes rather than rent. This was not always true for dual-earner and traditional families. Further, dual-career family homes were likely to be single-family detached homes rather than duplexes, condominiums or mobile homes. There was an over representation of dual-career home owners in the $60,001 to over $100,000 ranges. In contrast there was an under representation of dual-earner families in these same categories. Therefore, hypothesis five, that dual-career families would be home owners with higher home values than either dual-earner or traditional families was accepted. See Table 3 for comparisons.

Insert Table 3 here

When Chi squares were calculated between race and family type a significant relationship was found $X^2(4, N=3170) = 90.583$, p .0001. There were significantly fewer dual-career black and Hispanic families than were expected and significantly more dual-career white families. There was an over-representation of traditional white families and an under-representation of traditional black families. Thus, hypothesis six, that dual-career families would be more likely white than either dual-earner or traditional families was supported. Frequencies and expected values are shown in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 here

Discussion

This study shows that unemployment is lower for families with

higher occupational, educational and income levels. In order for the family to maintain its economic well-being, its members will have to retrain and gain additional educational as well as become two-earner households. This should protect them against unemployment and the problems of the declining value of the dollar (Dickenson, 1972; Hefferon, 1983).

This study is also supportive of Hinkle and Combs' (1983) instigation that recently formed households tend to be less well established and have lower incomes. That is, as one's income and occupational levels increase, the size and value of one's home increases accordingly. Morris & Winters (1978) describe this idea of buying more housing as income increases as an expenditure norm. That is a family behaves differently depending upon its socioeconomic status.

Conclusion

We studied the problem of dual-earners and economics and found that dual earners are fairing better in terms of economic hardship than either the dual-earner or traditional family. Investigations are needed in assessing the outlook for families and the economy. Studies are needed to assess whether or not this family type, dual-career family, is adding to the problem of economic instability. If jobs are scarce, spreading employment around to more people may be a solution worth exploring. Experimentation with part-time jobs may be one solution. Job-sharing as well as flex-time work may be another option for the dual-income family. Studies in regards to part-time, job-sharing and flex-time employment may generate innovative ideas for helping today's family deal with the hardship imposed by economic restraints.

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TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS BY FAMILY TYPE

Characteristic	Family type: DUAL-EARNER	DUAL-CAREER	TRADITIONAL
Age of Wife	34	37	35
Age of Husband	37	39	38
Average Number of Children	1.32	.92	1.6
Average Income			
Wife	$7,898.09	$9,832.58	$882.74
Husband	$15,556.30	$23,536.30	$17,887.40

TABLE 2

CROSS-CLASSIFICATIONS BETWEEN TOTAL TAXABLE FAMILY INCOME AND FAMILY TYPE (FREQUENCIES AND EXPECTED VALUES)

INCOME CATEGORIES	DUAL-EARNER	DUAL-CAREER	TRADITIONAL
Less than $10,001	141 (203.5)	3 (31)	248 (157.5)
$10,001-20,000	485 (479.1)	14 (74.1)	424 (370.8)
$20,001-30,000	547 (487.4)	56 (74.3)	336 (377.2)
$30,001-40,000	309 (266.8)	60 (40.7)	145 (206.5)
$40,001-50,000	115 (118.9)	51 (18.1)	63 (92.0)
$50,001-75,000	51 (75.3)	50 (11.5)	44 (58.3)
$75,001 or more	11 (28)	19 (4.3)	24 (21.7)
Total	1659 (51.91)	253 (7.82)	1284 (40.18)

X^2 (12, $\underline{N}$ = 3196) = 473.226, p .0001

TABLE 3

HOUSE VALUE BY FAMILY TYPE

CROSS CLASSIFICATION FREQUENCIES

AND EXPECTED VALUES

HOUSE VALUE categories	DUAL-EARNER	DUAL-CAREER	TRADITIONAL
$10,000-30,000	821 (799.4)	45 (121.9)	674 (618.7)
$30,001-40,000	193 (163)	12 (24.9)	109 (126.2)
$40,001-60,000	300 (281.9)	52 (43)	191 (218.2)
$60,001-80,000	180 (190)	46 (29)	140 (147)
$80,000-100,000	82 (113.2)	52 (17.3)	84 (87.6)
$100,001 and above	83 (111.6)	46 (17)	86 (86.4)
TOTAL	1659 (51.9)	253 (7.92)	1284 (40.18)

X^2 (10, $\underline{N}$ = 3196) = 221.209, p .0001

TABLE 4

Race by FAMILY TYPE

Characteristic	Family Type		
	DUAL-EARNER	DUAL-CAREER	TRADITIONAL
White	1044 (1142.2)	223 (174.3)	931 (884.6)
Black	547 (448.9)	21 68.5	297 (347.6)
Hispanic	54 (54)	4 (8.2)	46 (41.8)
TOTAL	1645 (51.89)	251 (7.72)	1274 (40.19)

X^2 (4, N = 3170) = 90.583, p .0001